DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 096 680 CS 201 572

AUTHOR Dodson, Don; Hachten, William A.
TITLE Communication and Development: African and Afro-American Parallels. Journalism Monographs, No. 28.
INSTITUTION Association for Education in Journalism.
PUB DATE May 73
NOTE 41p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.85 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *African Culture; African Literature; *Communication (Thought Transfer); Communication Skills; Cultural Differences; Economic Change; *Mass Media; *Negro Culture; Negro Literature; Negro Role; Newspapers; Political Power; Press Opinion; Racial Attitudes; *Racial Discrimination; Receptive Language

ABSTRACT

The communication patterns among Africans and American blacks are rooted in similarities. Both groups are constricted within societal communication networks, with blacks occupying peripheral positions. Special cognitive and linguistic handicaps erect obstinate barriers to reforms in the distribution and reciprocity of power. The assertion of black identity signifies an attempt to reorder the structure of power that governs relationships between blacks and whites. This assertion is probably a necessary but insufficient basis for the political development of blacks in Africa and the United States. It must be accompanied by fundamental changes in the political and economic structure of American society and the international system to be truly effective. Otherwise, the quest for change may take the form of massive upheaval instead of peaceful reform. (Author/SW)

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journalism monographs

NUMBER TWENTY-EIGHT

DON DODSON and
WILLIAM A. HACHTEN

Communication and Development: African and Afro-American Parallels

MAY 1973

Published serially since 1966 by the Association for Education in Journalism. Supported by the American Association of Schools and Departments of Journalism.

AEJ

CS207 512

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An AEJ Publication

JOURNALISM MONOGRAPHS is one of four publications of the Association for Education in Journalism: *Journalism Quarterly* (founded in 1924), which continues to be the Official Publication of the Association; *The Journalism Educator* (founded in 1946), which continues its affiliation with the American Society of Journalism School Administrators; *Journalism Abstracts* (founded in 1963); and JOURNALISM MONOGRAPHS (founded in 1966).

JOURNALISM MONOGRAPHS was supported for its first two years by a gift from the University of Texas, by the AEJ until 1969 and since then by the American Association of Schools and Departments of Journalism.

For all four publications, business correspondence should be directed to Prof. Harold Wilson, AEJ Publications Business Manager, School of Journalism and Mass Communications, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455.

All numbers are in print and may be ordered from the Business Office, singly or in bulk. Attention, librarians: Numbers 1 through 17 are now on microfilm and may be ordered from University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106.

Subscription Rates

Yearly subscription, $5.00; $5.50 outside the U. S. and Canada.

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NUMBER TWENTY-EIGHT • MAY 1973

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Published serially at Lexington, Kentucky, by the Association for Education in Journalism with the support of the American Association of Schools and Departments of Journalism.

Manuscripts and other editorial correspondence should be addressed to the editor, Prof. Bruce H. Westley, Department of Journalism, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky 40506. Business correspondence, including subscriptions, should be directed to AEJ Publications Business Manager, School of Journalism, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455.

Subscription rates: $5.00 per year, $5.50 outside the United States and Canada. Checks should be made out to Journalism Monographs.

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When American social scientists study political development, they usually look abroad for cases.[1] Rarely have they used the concept to examine their own back yards: the urban ghettos and rural hinterlands of the American Negro.

If the analogy has been scanted by scholars, it has not been lost on black activists, many of whom have proclaimed a common struggle with the Third World—and Africa in particular—against white domination. Eldridge Cleaver has popularized the notion that Afro-Americans are "a colonized people within the mother country."[2] Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton elaborate on this idea in *Black Power*.[3] And Kenneth Clark has lent his scholarly reputation to the metaphor: "The dark ghettos are social, political, educational and—above all—economic colonies," Clark asserts. "Their inhabitants are subject peoples, victims of the greed, cruelty, insensitivity, guilt, and fear of their masters."[4]

Husked of ideology, the metaphor still holds a kernel of truth from which fruitful research might sprout: Africans and Afro-Americans alike are "underdeveloped" in contrast to other systems that impinge upon them. While Black Africa is underdeveloped in relation to Western nations, Black America is underdeveloped in relation to the United States as a whole.

What is political development? Avoiding the cultural bias implicit in many definitions of the concept, Frederick W. Frey defines it as "Changes in the direction of greater distribution and reciprocity of power . . ." Power is a relationship in which the

[1] A notable exception in the field of communication is Lewis Donohew's research in Southern Appalachia. See "Communication and Readiness for Change in Appalachia," *Journalism Quarterly*, 44:679-87 (Winter 1967). See also Lowndes F. Stephens, "Media Exposure and Modernization Among the Appalachian Poor," *Journalism Quarterly*, 49:247-57; 262 (Summer 1972).

[2] "Playboy Interview," *Playboy*, Vol. 15 (December 1968), p. 98.

[3] *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967).

[4] *Dark Ghetto* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 11.

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behavior of one social unit alters the behavior of another. Reciprocity exists to the extent that power is shared. The distribution of power is determined by the "scope" and "domain" of the relationship. The "scope" is the "range of behaviors of the influencee altered by the influencer." The "domain" is the set of units whose behavior another unit alters within a given scope. The "level" of power in a system is the total volume of power whatever its distribution or reciprocity.[5]

Frey's approach is expanded here in two ways. Power is defined as the ability to alter behavior whether or not there is actual change. And the development of a system is analyzed primarily in terms of its relationship to other systems.

Frey notes that power depends in large part on communication. Although communication without power is common, power without communication is unlikely. Even more improbable without communication is change in the structure of power. Thus the pattern of communication may determine the pattern of political development. The scope of power is generally limited to the variety of messages a social unit can transmit. The domain of power is generally limited to receivers of those messages. Reciprocity depends on the degree to which communication is a one-way or a two-way process. Centrality in a communication network bolsters power by providing the greatest access to information and control.

The quest for power is at the heart of politics—especially the drive for freedom and equality. Cleaver stresses the "central fact that the relationship between black and white in America is a power equation, a power struggle, and that this power struggle is not only manifested in the aggregate (civil rights, black nationalism, etc.) but also in the interpersonal relationships, actions, and reactions between blacks and whites where taken into account."[6]

But blacks are disadvantaged in such relationships—hence their "underdevelopment"—because of certain communication factors. The communication patterns of Africans and Afro-Americans

[5] "Political Development, Power, and Communications in Turkey," in Lucian W. Pye, ed., *Communications and Political Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 298-326.

[6] *Soul on Ice* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1968), pp. 103-4.

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show many parallels that highlight some problems of political development. These parallels are discussed below.

Language and Cognition

"Emotion is completely Negro as reason is Greek," Leopold Senghor, the president of Senegal and poet of *négritude,* has stated.[7] White reasoning is analytical, in other words, and black reasoning is intuitive. Although Senghor's hyperbole is of dubious validity, it underscores a communication factor that may affect the distribution and reciprocity of power: different skills associated with language use. This factor raises a barrier to the political development of Africans and Afro-Americans.

Illiteracy cripples the ability of most Africans (75 to 80 percent) to communicate effectively in the modern world. On the basis of his research in Africa, Leonard Doob suggests that literacy is associated with mental alertness.[8] He also reports instances of perceptual distortion of modern communications—including non-print messages—by "traditional" Africans.[9] The implication is that traditional Africans may be limited in their ability to think abstractly. Robert A. LeVine refers to evidence that "as a whole Africans in their indigenous cultures are more inclined to think and conceptualize in concrete rather than abstract terms. This does not imply that complex thought processes are not involved, but rather that concrete objects and actions are used to communicate metaphorically."[10] Many Africans would retort that they do not suffer from a weaker ability to abstract but rather from the expectation that they should use Western abstractions rather than indigenous ones. Thus they must use European languages—usually French or English—when communicating with Westerners and often with each other.

Many literate Afro-Americans are also hobbled by such limita-

[7] Quoted in Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 127.

[8] *Communication in Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), pp. 175-7.

[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 259-78.

[10] "Personality and Change," in John N. Paden and Edward W. Soja, eds., *The African Experience,* Vol. 1 (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), pp. 296-7.

tions. Basil Bernstein's research on "elaborated" and "restricted" codes suggests that a "culture of poverty" produces language traits which affect cognitive and perceptual skills.[11] Synthesizing the findings of more than 100 studies, Frederick Williams and Rita C. Naremore generalize that

> *A poverty environment has a socializing influence upon its population, an influence which manifests itself in distinctions of language and cognition, and these distinctions in turn serve in the definition and perpetuation of that population as a poverty culture.*
>
> . . . The language of a "poverty" or a "disadvantaged" class symptomizes a *perceptual restriction* to the nonabstract—to that which is directly, personally, and grossly experienced, and only limited recognition of higher levels of conceptualization.
>
> . . . *Language characteristics* of a population may be a major *barrier* to their successful integration into a particular society or occupation.[12] (Original stress.)

As victims of a poverty culture, many black Americans show such characteristics. Some researchers maintain that these indicate linguistic or cognitive deficiencies.[13] The deficit argument prescribes compensatory programs—such as Head Start—to help the poverty child "catch up" to middle class children. Other researchers, however, argue that such characteristics indicate cultural differences rather than deficiencies.[14] Rejecting the label "sub-

[11] See "Elaborated and Restricted Codes: Their Social Origins and Some Consequences," in Alfred G. Smith, ed., *Communication and Culture* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), pp. 427-41. Bernstein wrestles with some of the policy implications of his work in "A Sociolinguistic Approach to Socialization: With Some Reference to Educability," in Frederick Williams, ed., *Language and Poverty: Perspectives on a Theme* (Chicago: Markham Publishing Company, 1970), pp. 25-61.

[12] "Language and Poverty: An Annotated Bibliography," Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin (undated bulletin), pp. iv-v.

[13] See Carl Bereiter and Siegfried Engelmann, *Teaching the Disadvantaged Child in the Preschool* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966); and Martin Deutsch, *The Disadvantaged Child* (New York: Basic Books, 1967).

[14] See Joan C. Baratz, "Teaching Reading in an Urban Negro School System," in Williams, *Language and Poverty: Perspectives on a Theme*, pp. 11-24; William Labov, "The Logic of Nonstandard English," *ibid.*, pp. 153-89; Roger W. Shuy, "The Sociolinguists and Urban Language Problems," *ibid.*, pp. 335-50; and William A. Stewart, "Toward a History of American Negro Dialect," *ibid.*, pp. 351-79.

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standard English" in favor of "nonstandard English," proponents of the difference position argue that English has a variety of dialects which are equally valid. They point out that black English has a well-developed structure which differs from standard English on the basis of systematic rules.[15]

A popular example is the use of the verb "to be":

"Where Claude?"
"He be workin'."

In the question, the word "is" is unnecessary. The word "be" in the reply indicates that Claude is doing something he usually does. "He workin'," on the other hand, would signify that Claude is doing something he usually doesn't do in that situation.[16]

One experiment used a sentence repetition test with 15 sentences in standard English and 15 in Negro nonstandard.[17] Each child (17 blacks and 30 whites) was asked to repeat exactly what he heard when contrasting sentences such as these were recited:

"She was the girl who didn't go to school because she had no clothes to wear."
"Dat girl, she ain' go ta school 'cause she ain't got no clothes to wear."

The whites were superior to the blacks in repeating standard English sentences, but the blacks were far superior to the whites in repeating Negro nonstandard sentences. The errors followed definite patterns for both blacks and whites. This suggests that both codes are structured systems obeying systematic rules.

While the deficit theorists would break the poverty cycle by changing the child, the difference theorists would change the schools. Instead of relying on compensatory programs, they would first teach the child to read in his own dialect before forcing him to read standard English. This approach, which many African educators endorse in their own countries, is consistent with a 1953 UNESCO report on the role of language in education:

[15] Some writers argue that this dialect is more Southern than distinctly black. See Juanita V. Williamson, "A Look at Black English," *The Crisis*, Vol. 78 (August 1971), pp. 169-73.

[16] "Use of Black English to Help Children Fit In at School Is Debated Here," *The New York Times*, May 16, 1971, p. 57.

[17] Baratz, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-20.

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It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue. Psychologically, it is the system of meaningful signs that in his mind works automatically for expression and understanding. Sociologically, it is a means of identification among the members of the community to which he belongs. Educationally he learns more quickly through it than through an unfamiliar medium.[18]

Some black educators and civic leaders oppose any recognition of black English. *The Crisis*, the magazine of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, stated in an editorial titled "Black Nonsense" that black children should "have the opportunity, and be encouraged, to learn the language which will best enable them to comprehend modern science and technology, equip them to communicate intelligently with other English-speaking peoples of all races, and to share in the exercise of national power."[19]

Whatever their linguistic merits, the deficit and difference positions both imply the importance of language to power. In an ethnocentric society, some differences may preclude power unless they are either eradicated (deficit position) or valued in their own right (difference position). If polyethnic alternatives gain acceptance—as in the introduction of vernacular primers—then minorities may have easier access to power. At present, however, difference *is* disadvantage. Just as the African—often speaking two or three vernacular languages—finds that he must learn a European language to participate in the modern world, so the American black finds that his ghetto language—so useful in his own community—is a handicap in the world at large.

Differences mark not only linguistic structure but also style of presentation. One black child-psychologist has written that the deprivation hypothesis should be discarded for a "psychological model that accounts for the strengths in our children."

Many children growing up in the black community learn a certain kind of mental toughness. They learn survival skills. They know how to deal with the credit man; they know how to deal with the cat at the corner market; they know how to deal with hypes and pimps. They know how to jive the school principal, and they show a lot of

[18] UNESCO, "The Use of Vernacular Language in Education," Monographs on Fundamental Education No. 8, 1953, p. 17.

[19] Vol. 78 (April-May 1971), p. 78.

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psychological cleverness and originality in the particular style they emerge with.[20]

These "strengths" are practiced in relation to power. Thomas Kochman, in his study of "rapping" in the ghetto, remarks that "The prestige norms which influence black speech behavior are those which have been successful in manipulating and controlling people and situations."[21] LeVine comments likewise that the concreteness of African thought lies at the root of the "tendency to define relations in terms of material expectations and material obligations."[22]

Such communication skills, however significant for power, are primarily defensive ones.[23] They form a strategy of survival. But they are less likely to extend the scope and domain of power. Enabling black people to keep from being changed rather than to change others, they pose little threat to prevailing patterns of power.

Differences of language and cognition, in short, impede communication between blacks and whites. Blacks are at a special disadvantage since the standards of everyday communication—including the language itself—are generally set by whites. Not only do such differences circumscribe the networks of communication open to Africans and Afro-Americans, but they also curb the ability to utilize available networks effectively. Changes in the distribution and reciprocity of power are discouraged in these circumstances.

Media Use Patterns

Media use patterns of Africans and Afro-Americans are comparable, but it is not entirely clear how much this is due to race rather than poverty. Both variables are obviously intertwined. Poor blacks and poor whites in the United States are more similar to each other in many ways than either is to the population as a whole. But being black accentuates the characteristics that set

[20] Joseph White, "Guidelines for Black Psychologists," *The Black Scholar*, 1:53 (March 1970).

[21] "'Rapping' in the Black Ghetto," *Transaction*, 6:34 (February 1969).

[22] "Personality and Change," p. 298.

[23] Defensiveness in asymmetrical situations is described by Labov, *op. cit.*, pp. 157-63.

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apart the poor. Bradley Greenberg and Brenda Dervin conclude that "to be poor is to be different from the general population; to be black is to be even more different."[24]

Interpersonal Communication. Numerous scholars have noted the primacy of interpersonal communication in Africa. George and Nancy Axinn, for example, found minimal use of mass media in a rural Igbo village in Nigeria. Talk was the main channel.[25]

Despite sparse findings in the United States, it appears that blacks depend on interpersonal communication more than whites do. The Kerner Commission observed that "Telephone and word of mouth exchanges on the streets, in churches, stores, pool halls, and bars, provide more information—and rumors—about events of direct concern to ghetto residents than the more conventional news media."[26] Several studies of the urban poor support the impression that reliance on interpersonal networks is stronger among blacks than whites. Nearly 24 percent of the blacks in Carl E. Block's study mentioned personal sources as most useful for product information, in comparison to 15 percent of the whites.[27] Greenberg and Dervin found that while only 7 percent of low-income whites preferred people as sources of local news, 22 percent of low-income blacks in their sample cited people. This was one of the few variables on which low-income whites and blacks differed significantly.[28]

Overall Media Exposure. African media, with the exception of radio, fall well below the minimum standards set by UNESCO for "adequate communications." That organization suggested as an "immediate target" in 1961 that a country should aim to provide for every 100 inhabitants at least 10 copies of daily newspapers,

[24] *Use of the Mass Media by the Urban Poor* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), p. 4. This indispensable book ties together most of the research on the subject.

[25] "Communication Among Nsukka Igbo: A Folk-Village Society," *Journalism Quarterly*, 46:320-24 (Summer 1969).

[26] *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968), pp. 375-6.

[27] "Communicating with the Urban Poor: An Exploratory Inquiry," *Journalism Quarterly*, 47:7 (Spring 1970).

[28] "Mass Communication Among the Urban Poor," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 34:234-5 (Summer 1970).

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five radio receivers, two television receivers and two cinema seats.[29] For the almost 300 million Africans (excluding the United Arab Republic, which is usually considered in the Middle East) in the mid-1960s, only about 175 daily newspapers circulated about 2.7 million copies daily; some 98 radio stations transmitted to roughly 428,000 receiving sets; and about 5,000 indoor movie theaters had about 1.3 million seats and an estimated weekly attendance of 3.7 million.[30] Nigeria, one of the most highly developed countries in Africa, had only 1.8 radio receivers, .05 television receivers, .7 daily newspaper copies, and .1 cinema seats per 100 persons.[31]

With such inadequate facilities, it is no wonder that exposure to the mass media is relatively low. Since the mass media are predominantly urban phenomena in Africa, media use among rural Africans is even lower than in the cities. Radio, the only medium that comes close to reaching a mass audience, still does not reach many listeners in the bush. A 1966 USIA survey found that regular radio listeners averaged about 60 to 65 percent in four of the five capitals surveyed (Abidjan, Accra, Lomé and Douala) and ran up to 89 percent in Dakar. But it also found that "listening drops off in the hinterland cities and especially in the bush areas. The number of regular listeners is no more than 15 percent in the bush areas of the Ivory Coast, Togo, and Cameroon, within 30 miles of the capitals."[32]

As African media exposure is low by Western standards, Afro-American media exposure is low by general American standards. Leo Bogart reports these figures from a national survey of media use "yesterday" by blacks and whites: 59 percent of the blacks had read newspapers, compared to 80 percent of the whites; 75 percent of the blacks had watched television, compared to 83 percent of the whites; and 55 percent of the blacks had listened to radio, compared to 68 percent of the whites.[33] A 1972 study by

[29] UNESCO, "Mass Media in the Developing Countries," Reports and Papers on Mass Communication No. 33, 1961.

[30] United States Information Agency, *Communications Data Book for Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1966), p. 1.

[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 69-71.

[32] USIA, "Mass Media Habits in West Africa," R-64-66, March 1966, p. 1.

[33] "Negroes' Use of the Media," American Newspaper Publishers Association, News Research Bulletin No. 10, July 10, 1968, pp. 47-8.

Bogart, based on a larger sample of 15,322 people, presents similar results for newspaper reading.[34]

Compared at the same economic level, blacks still display different media use from whites. The most striking differences that Bogart's latest figures show are among the poorest respondents. With incomes under $5,000, 69 percent of the whites and 44 percent of the blacks had read a newspaper the day before. Among those who did not graduate from high school, 72 percent of the whites and 53 percent of the blacks had read a newspaper the previous day.[35]

Greenberg and Dervin found that 53.8 percent of blacks and 69.4 percent of whites in the lowest income areas of one city looked at a newspaper every day. The newspaper section most read by blacks was the comics (42 percent, compared to 8.7 percent of whites) while the section most read by whites was the front page (36.7 percent, compared to 30.5 percent of blacks).[36] A more recent study, in which Greenberg and Dervin report greater differences between the low-income group and the general population than between blacks and whites within the low-income group, suggests that whites utilize the newspaper more thoroughly than blacks. Almost a quarter of the whites said they regularly looked at "all" of the newspaper, while only a tenth of the blacks said they did.[37]

Media Preferences. A USIA survey conducted in four West African capitals (Accra, Lagos, Abidjan and Dakar) in late 1960 spotlights the pattern of media use among urban Africans.[38] Radio had the largest regular audience; it was the primary source of information about world affairs; and it was regarded by most

[34] "Negro and White Media Exposure: New Evidence," *Journalism Quarterly*, 49:15-21 (Spring 1972).

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[36] "Communication Behavior of Poor Negroes and Whites Compared," American Newspaper Publishers Association, News Research Bulletin No. 11, July 24, 1968, p. 55.

[37] "Mass Communication Among the Urban Poor," p. 231; see also Block, "Communicating with the Urban Poor," p. 6; and Thomas H. Allen, "Mass Media Use Patterns in a Negro Ghetto," *Journalism Quarterly*, 45:526 (Autumn 1968).

[38] USIA, "Basic Attitudes and General Communication Habits in Four West African Capitals," PMS Report No. 51, July 1961.

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respondents as the most reliable source of information. Residents of Lagos and Abidjan were asked: "To know what is going on elsewhere in the world, how do you personally get your information?" Radio was cited by 77 percent in Lagos and 68 percent in Abidjan; newspapers by 60 percent and 52 percent; and friends and relatives by 56 percent and 50 percent.

Later urban studies generally corroborate these findings.[39] One of them found radio to be "not only the most widely used mass medium but also the one most frequently used to get the news."

> Radio is even more important than word of mouth communication as a source of news in the cities. However, radio is still far less important than word of mouth in the bush areas. . . . In addition, radio is considered the most trustworthy by those who use more than one medium. Newspapers generally run far behind radio and word of mouth as a source of news. . . .[40]

A similar—although not exactly congruent—pattern exists among Afro-Americans. (The differences may be due largely to the dearth of television in Africa.) U.S. blacks, in comparison to whites, seem to rely much more on broadcast media than print media.[41] First, radio and television have the largest regular audiences. Second, they are the primary sources of information about world affairs. Greenberg and Dervin found that television was mentioned as the primary source of information by 65.6 percent of their black respondents, radio by 19.8 percent and newspapers by only 10.7 percent. As a source of local news for blacks, radio outstripped television in this study.[42] And third, broadcast media are regarded as more reliable by Afro-Americans than print media.

[39] USIA, "Media Use Among Africans in Nairobi, Kenya," R-91-63 (R), May 1963; USIA, "Media Preferences of Better-Educated Nigerians and Radio Listening Habits of the General Population," R-203-64, December 1964; USIA, "East African Media Survey, Part I. Comparative Media Use and Listening to Foreign Radio Stations," R-122-66, November 1966.

[40] USIA, "Mass Media Habits in West Africa," p. 1.

[41] See Gary C. Byrne, "Mass Media and Political Socialization of Children and Pre-Adults," *Journalism Quarterly*, 46:140-42 (Spring 1969); Maxwell E. McCombs, "Negro Use of Television and Newspapers for Political Information, 1952-1964, "*Journal of Broadcasting*, 12:261-6 (Summer 1968); Block, "Communicating with the Urban Poor," *loc. cit.*

[42] "Communication Behavior of Poor Negroes and Whites Compared," pp. 56-7.

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Thomas H. Allen found that television ranked first (77 percent), radio second (12 percent) and newspapers third (6 percent) in perceived reliability.[43] Other investigators have published similar findings.[44]

Thus newspapers score relatively low in terms of exposure, perceived reliability and utilization of information on the part of both Africans and Afro-Americans. Newspapers seem to be used by Afro-Americans predominantly for entertainment (as in comics) rather than news import. When television is excluded from the figures, American blacks—like Africans—seem to prefer radio. If television were accessible to most Africans, the comparability of media use might be much greater.

Significance of Patterns. Africans have distrusted newspapers since colonial days. They resent the lack of sympathy that most papers, which were run by and for colonial officials and European settlers, showed toward African aspirations for independence. Similarly, in the United States most blacks distrust newspapers. They resent the long failure of most papers to acknowledge the existence of the black community within their circulation areas except as a breeding ground for criminals.

Greenberg and Dervin reason that poor blacks use newspapers less than poor whites because "the low-income white has at least race in common with the majority society and so newspapers will be a more useful source of information for him. The black does not have this similarity and must therefore locate more specialized sources of information."[45] This may explain why poor blacks use phonograph records and other people more than poor whites do.[46] Aside from linguistic and monetary barriers to their use, the established media may simply not be as relevant to the needs and interests of Africans and Afro-Americans as they are to most Americans.

The significance of such media use for political development is that the network of communication for Africans and Afro-

[43] "Mass Media Use Patterns and Functions in a Negro Ghetto," unpublished master's thesis, West Virginia University, 1967.

[44] Jack Lyle, *The News in Megalopolis* (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1967), p. 178; Greenberg and Dervin, "Mass Communication Among the Urban Poor," p. 233.

[45] Greenberg and Dervin, *ibid.*, p. 235.

[46] *Ibid.*

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Americans is more constricted than in highly developed systems. This may limit the availability of information that may be used to wield power effectively. Furthermore, broadcast messages permit a receiver somewhat less selectivity than print messages do. The predominance of broadcast over print exposure for Africans and Afro-Americans may pose the threat of easier manipulation by others.

Flow of Information

Early in 1970, in a sheep meadow about a one-hour drive from Rabat, King Hassan II of Morocco officially dedicated the first public communications satellite earth station in Africa.[47] This act marked a major step in the struggle of Africans to gain more control over their own communications. Africans, like Afro-Americans, are still submerged in a strongly uneven flow of information.

International media such as the BBC, Voice of America and the ORTF from France, as well as a broad array of British, French and American periodicals, have large audiences in Africa. African media themselves depend heavily on foreign content. "We learn more about American and British life from Nigerian television, at the moment, than we do about Nigerian life," complains Nigerian communications researcher Alfred Opubor.[48] Like most movies and television programs, much radio and newspaper content is produced abroad, usually in Western Europe or the United States. Africans rely almost entirely on the world news agencies—AP and UPI in addition to Reuters and Agence France Presse—for news not only about the world but also about themselves and their neighbors.

Since most of their clients are in the United States and Europe, these agencies transmit news of interest mainly to middle-class Americans or Europeans. Yet they guide the flow of news throughout the world. Their dominance is essentially a legacy of colonialism. London is still the communications hub for anglophonic Africa as Paris is for the francophonic nations. The technology

[47] "Building a Pan-African Communications Network," *Africa Report*, Vol. 17 (April 1972), p. 30.

[48] "Television for National Development?" Institute of Mass Communication, University of Lagos (mimeo), 1971, p. 3.

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of communications (such as cables, radio, telex, telephones and micro-wave relays) is oriented toward the former colonial capitals in Europe and rarely crosses the borders of neighboring African countries. With the old empire cable rate of a penny a word, it is cheaper even now to send news from former British colonies directly to London rather than to each other. A telephone call from Bangui to Nairobi must still be connected through the exchanges of Paris and London.[49]

So news from Africa is usually sent to Europe, then diffused back to Africa via Reuters or AFP. There is little lateral transmission of news within Africa even a decade after independence. News from Nairobi, for example, is likely to arrive in Dakar via London and Paris rather than directly. In any African capital it is usually easier to get news about Europe than it is to find out what is happening in neighboring countries or even in that capital's own hinterlands.

One African response has been to plan better communications links across the continent. Two major international projects have been started.[50] One is the pan-African telecommunications network for which King Hassan dedicated the first earth station. Four more stations in both East and West Africa have begun operations and another eight are under construction or soon to be started. The network, costing some $85.8 million, is expected to be established by 1975. The other major project is a trans-continental highway stretching across 4,000 miles from Mombassa on the Indian Ocean in the east to Lagos on the Atlantic in the west. Construction is expected to cost more than $780 million. The main purpose of the highway is to link Africa's major markets and open up its natural resources to world markets. But both projects would enable Africans to seize much greater control over the flow of international communications than they now have.

As the world news agencies dominate African communications, so the metropolitan dailies dominate newsflow in the United States. L. F. Palmer, Jr. notes that although the black press has almost a monopoly in covering the routine events of black social life, it cannot compete vigorously with the white press in the

[49] "Building a Pan-African Communications Network," *loc. cit.*
[50] *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

scramble for hard news. Palmer, a reporter who left a black paper for the Chicago *Daily News*, explains:

> Black newspapers, recognizing that they are in no position to compete with the metropolitan press in coverage of black communities, are greedy for handouts. In many instances, the black newspaper seems to have thrown in the towel. The metropolitan press, however, concerns itself largely with the most dramatic and sensational aspects of black life—conflict situations, militancy, unusual achievements of "celebrity blacks," and, of course, crime. Because they have the resources available, white dailies—often with reporters hired from black newspapers—give lengthy coverage to such stories. Thus black readers look increasingly to metropolitan dailies for articles about blacks, even though their treatment may be suspect.[51]

Although they had more respect for black newspapers, Syracuse blacks in a study by Robert Bontrager read white papers more: 51 did not read any newspapers, 58 read both black and white, two read black only, and 121 read white only.[52] The conclusion that the black paper is a second paper coincides with Gunnar Myrdal's observation that it is usually an "additional paper" supplementing metropolitan dailies with Negro news and opinions.[53] The black press has actually lost some of its power. In the 1940s—when the Pittsburgh *Courier* was selling approximately 257,000 copies, the Chicago *Daily Defender*, 202,000, and the Baltimore *Afro-American* 137,000—Mydral could write that the black press "has rightly been characterized as 'the greatest single power in the Negro race.' "[54] Today the *Courier* has slipped to about 37,000, the *Daily Defender* to about 21,000 and the *Afro-American* to about 34,000. The metropolitan dailies are supreme. Blacks typically learn about newsworthy events that concern them through white journalists.

Thus the flow of news is uneven in kind as well as quantity.

[51] "The Black Press in Transition," *Columbia Journalism Review*, Vol. 9 (Spring 1970), pp. 32-3.

[52] "An Investigation of Black Press and White Press Use Patterns in The Black Inner City of Syracuse, N.Y.," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1969.

[53] *An American Dilemma* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1944), p. 915.

[54] *Ibid.*, p. 924.

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One study detected some major warps in the coverage of selected newspapers around the world:

—In the flow of news *to the more-developed nations,* there was three times as much conflict/catastrophe news from less-developed than from more-developed nations. . . .

—In the flow of news to all nations, there was significantly more "other hard news" from more-developed than from less-developed nations.

—Only 14% of the news from less-developed nations was "soft news," compared with 24% from the more-developed nations.

—A total of 38% of all news from less-developed nations was in the conflict/catastrophe categories, compared with only 12% from the more-developed nations.[55]

This pattern persists even within African countries. John Sigler's content analysis of the press in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia found that within these countries news flows primarily from the more developed to the less developed and, even within culturally similar regions, from the more powerful to the weaker sectors.[56] This is typical throughout Africa.

The flow of news in the United States exhibits similar characteristics. It takes only a casual reading of the press to see that the news is overwhelmingly from the more developed segment of society. There is little "soft" news from the ghetto and almost no "hard" news that is not conflict-oriented. Blacks make news through crime and violence.

Some confirmation of these observations is provided by a study of how Milwaukee's two daily newspapers covered black grievances during the two years spanning the 1967 riot in Milwaukee.[57] The sample included 2,649 items that were coded in terms of "initiative" or "response" in probing racial problems. There was a significant increase in items immediately after the

[55] William A. Hachten, "The Flow of the News and Underdevelopment: A Pilot Study of the African Press," unpublished paper prepared for presentation to Association for Education in Journalism, University of Iowa, August 1966, p. 15.

[56] "News Flow in the North African International Subsystem," *International Studies Quarterly,* 12:381-97 (December 1969).

[57] Don Dodson, "Coverage of Racial Problems in Milwaukee's Daily Newspapers," unpublished paper prepared for presentation to Association for Education in Journalism, University of California-Berkeley, August 1969.

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riot and immediately after the assassination of Martin Luther King. Although more than 60 percent of all items appeared after the riot, there was no corresponding increase in initiative of coverage. About a two-to-one ratio of response to initiative was found throughout both time periods. Thus it seems to take a crisis to elicit greater attention to underlying problems. Grievances that were dramatized by demonstrations—a form of conflict—received markedly more treatment than grievances that were not. But the grievances were still overshadowed by the spot news they sparked.

The flow of information, in short, minimizes the newsworthiness of Africans and Afro-Americans. When they are covered by the "white" press, they are frequently portrayed as perpetrators of violence and other forms of conflict. The flow of information—highly uneven both in kind and in quantity—distorts the daily reality of blacks in Africa and the United States. Exercising little control over communication networks that include whites, blacks are less able to transmit their own views of reality. The distribution and reciprocity of power, consequently, are weighted against them. To alter the configuration of power requires that the flow of information be equalized. Otherwise blacks may remain pawns of communication rather than masters of it.

Bias of Communication

However blacks perceive the relative reliability of different channels of communication, there seems to be a general distrust of all media—especially among ghetto blacks in the United States. High use does not necessarily imply respect for a medium. And the ranking of perceived reliability does not indicate absolute perception of reliability. This point has been stressed by the Kerner Commission:

> Distrust and dislike of the media among ghetto Negroes encompass all the media, though in general, the newspapers are mistrusted more than the television. This is not because television is thought to be more sensitive or responsive to Negro needs and aspirations, but because ghetto residents believe that television at least lets them see the actual events for themselves.[58]

[58] *Report of the Commission*, p. 374.

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The reasons cited by the Kerner Commission for such pervasive distrust all add up to the charge of media bias. This conclusion echoes accusations frequently made by both Africans and Afro-Americans.

There are few stable reference points in the slippery subject of news bias. Some distortion is practically inevitable when a medium dominated by one ethnic group—whether it is The New York *Times*, *The Black Panther* or *The Nationalist* of Tanzania —reports the affairs of another ethnic group. And black racism, such as virulent tribalism in Africa, cannot be ignored. But these provisos do not vitiate charges of racial bias in the "white" press. Both Africans and Afro-Americans can point to many specific distortions in the mass media. Examples have been well documented elsewhere.[59]

Racism is often unconscious or indirect. Robert E. Smith of *Newsday* has culled many such peccadilloes from the press.[60] Reporting President Johnson's farewell to several hundred black officials, the New York *Times* described them as "the well-dressed Negro officials and their wives." The paternalistic "articulate" pops up frequently. A *Newsday* article described young blacks supporting a political candidate as "clean-shaven and articulate." Smith piles example on example of subtle offenses and back-handed compliments. Overstating his case, he nonetheless touches on the truth when he remarks that "white editors, reporters, and news managers are always slightly surprised when black people behave like something other than savages."[61] Playing up savagery (by middle-class white values) when it can, the press often tinges

[59] For example, *Ibid.*, pp. 368-78; Ted Poston, "The American Negro and Newspaper Myths," in Paul L. Fischer and Ralph L. Lowenstein, eds., *Race and the News Media* (New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1967), pp. 68-72; Durham Caldwell, "The Paper Riot," *Columbia Journalism Review*, Vol. 4 (Fall 1965), pp. 18-20; William A. Hachten, *Muffled Drums: The News Media in Africa* (Ames: The Iowa State University Press, 1971), pp. 79-87; Rosalynde Ainslie, *The Press in Africa* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1966), pp. 13-16; Hilary Ng'weno, "Controversy Paradrop: As an African Sees It," *IPI Report*, Vol. 13 (January 1965), p. 7.

[60] "They Still Write It White," *Columbia Journalism Review*, Vol. 8 (Spring 1969), pp. 36-8.

[61] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

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its stories with some wonderment when blacks act in a civilized way.

The news from Africa during the first two weeks of January, 1972 illustrates how Africa is treated in the Western press. After months of neglect, Africa returned to the spotlight briefly while Mrs. Richard Nixon made a weeklong good will trip to Liberia, Ghana and the Ivory Coast. But the focus, of course, was on the "soft" news of Mrs. Nixon's activities. A few days after she departed, the government of Ghana, one of Africa's few democratic regimes, was toppled by a military coup. This significant event rated only a brief mention—without the background and interpretation that would provide understanding—in American news media.

For example, on January 13 the San Francisco *Chronicle* buried an 8¾-inch Reuters story headlined "Army Coup in Ghana" on page 13. But eight days earlier the *Chronicle* had splashed a UPI dispatch from Liberia over 39 inches of page 1 and 8¾ inches of the back page. The six-column headline, "Pat Nixon Shakes a Leg," topped two photographs. One showed Mrs. Nixon modeling a Liberian dress and headtie. The other showed two bare-breasted women doing a dance for Mrs. Nixon. The lead explained: "Pat Nixon watched topless young girls perform a sinuous snake dance yesterday; then, wearing a floor-length African dress, she tried a few dance steps herself." Many Africans find this kind of news coverage offensive and irritating.

Such reporting breeds resentment among those it demeans. Eighty-three percent of the Los Angeles blacks surveyed by Jack Lyle felt that coverage of blacks in the mass media was inadequate. Half of them thought coverage was consistently unfair.[62] A national survey commissioned by the CBS network reports similar findings.[63]

Lerone Bennett, senior editor of *Ebony*, asserts that coverage by "white news media" is "shot through with race and class bias."[64]

[62] Lyle, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

[63] Columbia Broadcasting System, *White and Negro Attitudes Towards Race Related Issues and Activities* (Princeton: Public Opinion Research Corp., July 9, 1968).

[64] *The New York Times*, Aug. 30, 1970.

Charles Evers, the Mississippi civil rights leader, has charged that "The press has been and is one of the worst enemies, along with the police, that the Negro has in Mississippi."[65] Compare those statements with the late Tom Mboya's damning remark that "The American press is America's worst enemy in Africa."[66] Sule Kolo, Nigeria's High Commissioner and doyen of the African Heads of Missions in Great Britain, wrote a bitter letter to London's *Sunday Times* in November, 1971 on behalf of his colleagues. Protesting its special survey of African countries written by Richard West, Kolo accused the *Sunday Times* of "erroneous, misleading and tendentious information," "a most regrettable vendetta," "downright falsehood and intolerable abuse," and "wanton and unwarranted attacks on the persons of African Heads of State and peoples." Kolo's broadside may seem slightly shrill in light of such complaints as this:

> Further, Mr. West recorded that the Ghanaians were the world's greatest eaters of potatoes, giving the average intake as 2½ lbs. per person per day.
>
> One wonders how this could possibly be true in a country where very few inhabitants have ever seen any potatoes.[67]

But that there is strong cause for complaint by Africans and Afro-Americans—even if it is sometimes shouted in the wrong direction—is hardly disputable.

A study of press coverage of Africa concludes:

> Background and interpretive news, and the day-to-day story of slow tortuous economic and social progress against great odds is not being effectively told. All of this is directly related to the ways that the world news services tell the story.[68]

Compare the Kerner Commission's indictment of press coverage in the United States:

[65] Jack Lyle, ed., *The Black American and the Press* (Los Angeles: The Ward Ritchie Press, 1968), p. 68.

[66] "Two African Views of the U.S. Press . . . ," *Africa Report*, Vol. 6 (May 1961), p. 16.

[67] "African Diplomats Flay British 'Sunday Times'," *Nigerian Observer*, November 27, 1971, p. 10.

[68] Hachten, "Flow of the News," p. 21.

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> They have not communicated to the majority of their audience—which is white—a sense of the degradation, misery, and hopelessness of living in the ghetto. They have not communicated to whites a feeling for the difficulties and frustrations of being a Negro in the United States.[69]

The two statements are remarkably similar. So is media coverage of Africans and Afro-Americans.

Racial bias in the press is part of a much broader problem. The English language itself is a carrier of stereotypes. In a short essay titled "The English Language is My Enemy!", actor Ossie Davis relates that out of 134 synonyms for "whiteness" listed in *Roget's Thesaurus* he found 44 he thought were favorable.[70] These included *purity, cleanness, immaculateness, bright, shining, ivory, fair, blonde, stainless, clean, clear, chaste, unblemished, unsullied, innocent, honorable, upright, just, straightforward, fair, genuine, trustworthy.* He found only 10 synonyms with even mildly negative connotations. These included *gloss over, whitewash, gray, wan, pale, ashen.*

Davis found 120 synonyms for "blackness," 60 of which seemed distinctly unfavorable to him and none even mildly positive. Among the 60 were *blot, blotch, smut, smudge, sully, begrime, soot, becloud, obscure, dingy, murky, low-toned, threatening, frowning, foreboding, forbidden, sinister, baneful, dismal, thundery, evil, wicked, malignant, deadly, unclean, dirty, unwashed, foul.* Davis concludes:

> Any teacher good or bad, white or black, Jew or Gentile, who uses the English language as a medium of communication is forced, willy-nilly, to teach the Negro child 60 ways to despise himself, and the white child 60 ways to aid and abet him in the crime.
>
> Who speaks to me in my Mother Tongue damns me indeed!

The stereotypes seep into other forms of communication besides the news. Literature is a good example. A recent study of images of Africa comes to the same conclusion as an older study of images of Afro-Americans: Western literature has generally de-

[69] *Report of the Commission*, p. 383.

[70] *Negro History Bulletin*, Vol. 30 (April 1967), p. 18.

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picted the black man more as a stereotype than as a human being.[71] Dorothy Hammond and Alta Jablow conclude that "the literary image of Africa is a fantasy of a continent and a people that never was and could never be."[72] This fantasy has been reflected in school texts.[73] And movies have reinforced the stereotypes: Stepin Fetchit and Tarzan are symbols of the black Sambo and the white hero. As Hammond and Jablow remark, films have spread "the old notions of the Dark Continent inhabited by archetypal figures: howling savages, faithful servants, sinister half-breeds, white hunters, and gallant colonial officials. In the face of their appeal, durability, and pervasiveness, reality has little chance of acceptance."[74]

Perhaps the most devastating racism is that communicated by interpersonal channels. The racism is one of structure as well as content. White people control the setting and the form of many personal contacts with blacks. Black psychiatrist Alvin F. Poussaint recalls an incident that vividly highlights the structural bias of interpersonal communication between blacks and whites:

> Once last year as I was leaving my office in Jackson, Miss., with my Negro secretary, a white policeman yelled, "Hey, boy! Come here!" Somewhat bothered, I retorted: "I'm no boy!" He then rushed at me, inflamed, and stood towering over me, snorting, "What d'ja say, boy?" Quickly he frisked me and demanded, "What's your name, boy?" Frightened, I replied, "Dr. Poussaint. I'm a physician." He angrily chuckled and hissed, "What's your first name, boy?" When I hesitated he assumed a threatening stance and clenched his fists. As my heart palpitated, I muttered in profound humiliation, "Alvin."
>
> He continued his psychological brutality, bellowing, "Alvin, the next time I call you, you come right away, you hear? You hear?" I hesitated. "You hear me, boy?" My voice trembling with helplessness, but following my instincts of self-preservation, I murmured, "Yes, sir." Now fully satisfied that I had performed and acquiesced to my "boy status," he dismissed me with, "Now, boy, go on and get out of

[71] Dorothy Hammond and Alta Jablow, *The Africa That Never Was: Four Centuries of British Writing About Africa* (New York: Twayne Publishers Inc., 1970); Seymour L. Gross and John Edward Hardy, eds., *Images of the Negro in American Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).

[72] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[73] See Charles E. Silberman, *Crisis in Black and White* (New York: Random House, 1964), pp. 167-8.

[74] Hammond and Jablow, *loc. cit.*

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here or next time we'll take you for a little ride down to the station house!"[75]

The white policeman was in complete control of the communicative relationship. The structural constraints and the denigrating content of the exchange made Poussaint squirm with humiliation and impotence. "The self-hate that I felt at that time," Poussaint muses, "was generated by the fact that I and my people were completely helpless and powerless to destroy that white bigot and all that he represented."[76]

The bias of much communication, in short, acts to justify the ruling or dominant order. Insofar as either blacks or whites accept the bias, they uphold the prevailing configuration of power. To the extent that blacks perceive the bias, they have broken out of the mold of acceptance. Perceiving the bias—and refusing to accept it—is the first step toward reform of the social order. But the tools of change are also essential.

Crisis of Identity

"The worst crime the white man has committed has been to teach us to hate ourselves," said Malcolm X.[77] Torn from their traditional cultures, blacks in Africa and the New World were stripped of their identity by colonialism and slavery. Keeping them denuded, communication—controlled by whites—constantly fed them distorted images of themselves. They have been portrayed as ugly and ignorant, lazy and superstitious, primitive and violent, sensual and childlike. Many blacks internalized these images. Social psychologists have pinpointed the consequences: self-hate and a (realistic) sense of impotence.[78] As social outcasts, blacks began to question their own identity. The trauma of "facelessness" is captured in the titles of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man,* James Baldwin's *Nobody Knows My Name* and Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks.*

[75] "A Negro Psychiatrist Explains the Negro Psyche," *The New York Times Magazine,* Aug. 20, 1967, p. 53.

[76] *Ibid.*

[77] Quoted in Silberman, *op. cit.,* p. 68.

[78] See Abram Kardiner and Lionel Ovesey, *The Mark of Oppression* (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1962).

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More and more, however, blacks in both Africa and the United States have recognized what Baldwin has called "the necessity to remake the world in their own image, to impose this image on the world, and no longer be controlled by the vision of the world, and of themselves, held by other people."[79]

Africa's poets of *négritude*—Senghor, Rabemananjara, David Diop, U'Tamsi and others—remolded the image of the black man. The *négritude* movement has been a cultural assertion that blacks have unique beauty, strength, virtue and abilities. Although it has been rooted primarily in French-speaking Africa, it has an equivalent in the more political notion in English-speaking Africa of the "African personality." With national independence came pride and assertion in international relations. Such assertion has not altered the harsh economic obstacles to political development, but it has been a prerequisite of it.

Black Americans have also taken pride in African independence and have begun to assert their own identity in pan-racial terms. W. E. B. DuBois and Marcus Garvey were the harbingers of this phenomenon. The civil rights movement and the Black Muslims, followed by the "Black Power" movement and the Black Panther Party, have helped redefine racial relations in the United States. Regardless of the merits of their specific programs, they have helped blacks to throw off the shackles of psychological acquiescence. "Soul" is the Afro-American equivalent of *négritude*.

The flush of optimism among blacks on both continents in the early 1960s, unfortunately, has soured into widespread disillusionment due to the intractability of many problems. The result may be to compromise the efforts of many Africans and Afro-Americans to do what James Baldwin said was necessary: to remake their own image and impose it on the rest of the world. That is a fundamental prerequisite of redistributing power more equitably and it is essentially a communication problem.

Ownership and Control of the Media

The creation of their own media is one way African and American blacks have tried to assert their own images of reality. Even before the American Civil War this was so. Willis A.

[79] *Nobody Knows My Name* (New York: Dial Press, 1961), p. 29.

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Hodges, a black man, objected to New York *Sun* editorials opposing extension of Negro suffrage. Hodges wrote a reply which was published for $15. But his reply was modified and run as an advertisement. When Hodges protested, he was told, "*The Sun* shines for all white men, and not for colored men." He was also told that if he wanted to advocate the cause of blacks, he would have to publish his own paper. So in 1847 Hodges established *The Ram's Horn*.[80]

This reaction has characterized the black media in America and Africa from their beginnings to the present.

"We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us," stated an editorial in the first issue of *Freedom's Journal*, the first black daily in the United States, in its inaugural issue in 1827.[81] A similar sentiment was expressed almost 140 years later when representatives of 22 African states met to discuss the formation of a pan-African news agency. Its purpose, according to one news story, would be to project the "true image of each African country, and promote better understanding between African states. It would then be possible for countries outside to view events in the continent through African minds."[82] The plan has not yet been fulfilled.

The 1960s were a time for shedding European influences in Africa. The mass media had come to Africa through Europeans and were established for their convenience. Africans were at best an eavesdropping audience unless they founded their own newspapers. The European press in Africa was an instrument of political power used to maintain the status quo. This was not lost on Africans, who deeply resented its chilliness toward African independence. It is natural, therefore, that there has been constant pressure for Africanization of the media in the past decade.

Most European newspapers in Africa were either shut down or sold to the new governments after independence. Two of the London *Daily Mirror* group's three papers in West Africa, the Accra *Daily Graphic* and the Freetown *Daily Mail*, were sold to the governments of Ghana and Sierra Leone. Lord Thomson of

[80] I. Garland Penn, *The Afro-American Press and Its Editors* (Springfield, Mass.: Willey & Co., Publishers, 1891), pp. 61-65.

[81] Quoted in Silberman, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

[82] *Egyptian Mail*, quoted by Hachten, "Flow of the News," p. 8.

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Fleet closed down his *Daily* and *Sunday Express* in Nigeria in 1965. The European-owned *East African Standard* group discontinued its *Mombasa Times* in Kenya. African governments, meanwhile, have started their own newspapers, news agencies, and radio and television stations with great ambition if not always careful planning.

With the pressures for Africanization and the steady withdrawal of Europeans from Africa, the news media have faced acute personnel problems. UNESCO reported in 1961 that

> Africa suffers more acutely from a dearth of trained personnel than any other major region. Some countries, for example, cannot claim a single qualified journalist and in a number of others, journalists and radio broadcasters work only on a part-time basis. . . . (I)n the fields of film and television, there are no facilities for training professional and technical staff, apart from "on-the-job" instruction.[83]

Due to a number of crash training schemes and a few permanent journalism education programs, the picture has brightened. Africans have a much greater voice in what is printed and broadcast. But the number of first-rate African journalists is still disappointingly small and Europeans continue to hold key positions in some African news organizations.

In the United States there are relatively few black journalists. Edward J. Trayes found that of the 7,880 editorial employees of 196 dailies with more than 10,000 circulation at the end of 1969, only 157 (just under 2 percent) were black. Only 83 (2.25 percent) of the 3,691 reporters were black. Of the 1,219 news executives, only five (.41 percent) were black. No paper had more than seven black newsmen, and 149 of the 196 had none at all.[84]

Later figures show no perceptible improvement over the ones obtained by Trayes. The Minority Employment Committee of the American Society of Newspaper Editors reported in April, 1972 that it could locate only 253 minority group (Negro, Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, Indian, Cuban and Oriental) pro-

[83] "Mass Media in the Developing Countries," p. 31.

[84] "Still Few Blacks on Dailies, But 50% More in J-Schools, Recent Surveys Indicate," *Journalism Quarterly*, 47:356-7 (Summer 1970).

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fessionals on daily newspapers in the United States. Granting that it may have missed some employees on small newspapers, the committee estimated the minority total at 300, or .75 percent of the entire writer-photographer-editor pool.[85]

The number of black journalism majors in colleges and universities, on the other hand, tripled from 1968-69 to 1970-71.[86] Yet only 4.2 percent of all juniors and seniors majoring in journalism in 1971-72 were black.[87]

While Africans have dislodged European interests from broadcasting, blacks in the United States today do not own a single one of the more than 900 licensed over-the-air television stations. Blacks own only about 17 of the approximately 350 "soul" radio stations that cater to black audiences. And they participate in the ownership of only two of the more than 4,500 cable TV franchises that had been granted by the end of 1971.[88] But blacks do produce more than 300 newspapers and magazines, from *Bronze Thrills* to *The Black Scholar*, from the tiny *Peninsula Bulletin* in northern California to the giant *Ebony*, from the conservative Atlanta *Daily World* to the militant *Black Panther*.

White ownership of soul radio has its parallel in African magazine publishing. Africa's two most popular magazines are both owned by white South African mining millionaire Jim Bailey. They are *Drum*, a general interest magazine, and *African Film*, a photo comic book catering to the fantasies of urban Africans with the adventures of a black James Bond known as The Spear. Like *African Film*, soul radio caters to its audience in an exploitative way. Its unrelenting format of rhythm-and-blues music and commercials, to the exclusion of most other concerns of blacks, has led Black Panther Chief of Staff David Hilliard to comment that "The only social relevance it has is that it has exploited us culturally. It has taken our music and given it to us with com-

[85] Sidebar in Dorothy Gilliam, "What Do Black Journalists Want?" *Columbia Journalism Review*, Vol. 11 (May-June 1972), p. 51.

[86] Edward J. Trayes, "Blacks Triple Enrollment as J-Majors in 3 Years," *Journalism Educator*, 26:14 (Fall 1971).

[87] Edward J. Trayes, "Blacks Increase Enrollments, But Hold Few J-Faculty Jobs," *Journalism Educator*, 27:18-19 (October 1972).

[88] Monroe W. Karmin, "Blacks Seeking Control of Big-City Cable TV Face Uphill Struggle," *Wall Street Journal*, Dec. 29, 1971, p. 17.

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mercials every ten seconds. That is cultural infiltration."[89] Says a deejay: "Soul radio is one of the most exploitative forces that the black community has ever been confronted with. It is totally representative of forces exploiting the black. It ranks perhaps the biggest because it perpetuates images that we are not."[90] The scarcity of blacks in soul radio prompted one writing team to remark acidly that "In the typical ghetto radio station, only the disc jockeys and the janitors are black."[91]

Blacks are trying to rectify this situation. Charles Hamilton writes:

> For a number of economic reasons, it will remain exceptionally difficult for blacks to gain control of a significant portion of the electronic media. Yet such is the power of radio and television at this time that few financial aims can be more important than for black people to acquire a major television and radio network. In fact, this would be the most important single breakthrough in the black struggle, and would justify every bit of time, talent and resources expended toward its achievement.[92]

Hamilton's statement is not just the musing of a theoretician. Blacks are mounting important campaigns to gain control of cable television franchises in the metropolitan areas where black viewers are concentrated. "We're concerned with ownership," declares William D. Wright, the national coordinator of an organization called Black Efforts for Soul in Television. "We don't just want to be on a few channels, singing and dancing; we want control."[93]

The National Association of Broadcasters has not been notably sympathetic to such ambitions. Remarks one of its top officials: "I guess the blacks will have to get into cable the way they'll have to get into every other industry in this country—by producing black capital, which, I know, is easier said than done." The

[89] Anthony J. Meyer, "Black Voices and Format Regulations: A Study in Black-Oriented Radio," ERIC Clearinghouse on Media and Technology, Stanford University, May 1971, p. 17.

[90] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[91] Peter M. Sandman, David M. Rubin and David B. Sachsman, *Media: An Introductory Analysis of American Mass Communications* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1972), p. 391.

[92] "Blacks and Mass Media," *The Columbia Forum*, Vol. 1 New Series (Winter 1971), p. 53.

[93] Karmin, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

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intractability of this problem almost overwhelmed Ed Lloyd, whose company has held the cable franchise for South Orange, N.J., since 1968. When Lloyd tried to raise money, financiers balked because he had no experience. "The banks won't take a risk. They say, 'Go generate a cash flow and come back.' " Finally Lloyd took in white partners and gave up 80 percent of his control. "For a black to get money, he has to give up control to whites," he states bitterly.[94]

Their limited control of the mass media robs blacks of effective power in the United States. Reciprocity of power between races is blocked as long as blacks cannot bore in from the periphery of communication networks controlled by whites. The domain of power is also constricted if blacks do not have strong mouthpieces to reach whites as well as other blacks. Greater power should become possible as more blacks are employed in the mass media. But employment is not enough. Black faces do not mean black power—black ownership does. If blacks can wrest from whites more control over broadcasting, especially cable television, much greater power will be within their grasp. Africanization of the media in Africa, while by no means complete, may offer a lesson for black Americans. Even though the blessings of Africanization may not be totally unalloyed, it has at least given Africans an opportunity to assert more power both internally and internationally.

Journalistic Stance

The black press in Africa and America developed as a vehicle for protest against oppression. Black African journalism was linked with Afro-American journalism from the beginning. One of the first African papers, *The Liberian Herald*, was founded by an American Negro who arrived in Monrovia in 1826. After closing a few months later, it was revived in 1830 by another American—John B. Russworm, the first editor of *Freedom's Journal*. As *Freedom's Journal* fought slavery in the United States, so *The Liberian Herald* fought the slave trade in Africa. These early papers helped set the tone for black journalists on both continents.

[94] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

The black press has had some success in raising political awareness for the purpose of redistributing power in Africa and the United States. The impact of the party press in Ghana and Nigeria before independence, and of Robert S. Abbott's Chicago *Daily Defender* several decades ago, attests to the potential of the black press to foster political development by dramatizing grievances. While the "establishment" black press in the United States has often been attacked as timid in recent years, the agitational spirit of the earlier papers is still reflected in such organs as *Muhammad Speaks* and *The Black Panther*.

Their role in protest movements has led much of the African and the Afro-American press to challenge the American journalistic ideal of objectivity. Herbert Passin outlines the rationale for this phenomenon:

> Where the political temperature is high, the journalist usually considers "objectivity" and "commitment" to be the same thing, because both are identified with "the truth"; what is "true" is naturally "objective," and what he believes is naturally "true." This linkage holds whether the journalist is in opposition, say to a colonial government, or in support of a movement or government in power.[95]

This attitude is reflected in the news columns of both African and Afro-American newspapers. And it has been given explicit—and unabashed—formulation by some journalists themselves. Kwame Nkrumah, a former journalist, remarked at the dedication of the Ghana News Agency building in 1965 that "We see right and wrong, just and unjust, progressive and reactionary, positive and negative, friend and foe. We are PARTISAN." He continued:

> The necessity for a clear ideology of the African Revolution must be to view problems in the right perspective so that they can write them with insight and understanding. The drumbeat of the African Revolution must throb in the pages of his newspapers and magazines, it must sound in the voices and feelings of our news readers. To this end, we need a new kind of journalist of the African Revolution.[96]

Thomas Picou, managing editor of the Chicago *Daily Defender*,

[95] "Writer and Journalist in the Transitional Society," in Pye, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-3.

[96] *The Spark*, Oct. 1, 1965, p. 3.

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has voiced similar sentiments about objectivity. He asserts firmly that the black reporter must be partisan. Says Picou:

> He's partisan by the very fact that he's black. The white reporter is partisan by the very fact that he's white. . . . The newspaper must not just project the facts. There must be commitment, dedication. . . . One of the problems with the white press is that it just presents the two sides to an argument and lets the reader choose which is best—like a debate. An "objective" reporter must project the truth. . . . This newspaper is a crusader for the freedom of black people.[97]

Many black journalists in the United States disagree with Picou's espousal of partisanship. Ninety black editors and publishers recently were asked, "What is the current role of the black press in America?"[98] Fifty-nine said it is to inform the black community about itself, 28 to crusade atgainst injustice, 23 to report news about blacks that is ignored by the rest of the press, and 4 to influence black leaders. Picou's statement, apparently, would be endorsed by about 30 percent of the men who run the black press. But most of these men are more cautious than the younger journalists they hire. The Minority Employment Committee of ASNE states, "There can be no escaping the observation that the continuing tensions in the larger national society play a major role in tending to radicalize those members of the minority groups engaged in journalism, and those studying for careers in journalism."[99]

The issue is probably far more complex than these surveys reveal. Blacks who are journalists in Africa and the United States cannot easily shed their commitment to a fair share of power. Yet most of them have absorbed, even if they do not fully accept, the ideal of objectivity in journalism. The result is likely to be an uncomfortable ambivalence rather than confident resolution of the conflict between objectivity and commitment. White reporters are generally spared such acute conflict because their social goals are neither so clear nor so pressing. "There are many pressures

[97] Don Dodson, "Participant Observation at the Chicago Daily Defender," unpublished paper, Northwestern University, 1968, p. 26.

[98] Henry G. La Brie III and William J. Zima, "Directional Quandaries of the Black Press in the United States," *Journalism Quarterly*, 48:642 (Winter 1971).

[99] Sidebar in Gilliam, *loc. cit.*

—more for black reporters than for white reporters," asserts one black journalist. "We know police brutality from personal experience. I used to get so involved that I would sit at my typewriter and freeze up. I decided I had to take myself out of it before I could write."[100]

Interviews at the *Daily Defender* in 1968 uncovered pervasive ambivalence about objectivity.[101] Most of the newsmen immediately proclaimed the virtues of objectivity and the dangers of partisanship. When pressed, however, they said partisanship is both unavoidable and desirable. One reporter, who accused publisher John H. Sengstacke of vacillating between reactionary and militant, said, "I write what he wants. If I agree with what he wants, that's all right. If I don't agree, that's all right too. He pays me to do a job." But, he added, he did shape his own stories: "I try to give direction to the news." Another reporter said: "I think we're too concerned with objectivity. There's a white double standard here. It's always black people who are supposed to be loving and forgiving and objective. We have to be partisan." Remarked another: "I got my journalistic training in the tradition of objective reporting. But I'm beginning to zing people more. Every now and then I throw in a gem of my own." Even the white news editor, who maintained that objectivity is essential, recalled how he had tried to write like a black man when he was a reporter for the *Daily Defender*. "It's easy," he quipped. "All you do is find out what George Wallace says and turn it around."

Unlike Nkrumah or Picou, none of the *Daily Defender* reporters argued that "true" objectivity is compatible with partisanship. When asked about objectivity, most of them endorsed it. When asked about commitment, most of them endorsed that too. The apparent inconsistency was not resolved. Conversations with African journalists suggest that they feel a similar ambivalence. The effect on the news columns of African and Afro-American newspapers is probably not conscious crusading so much as haphazard judgments.

Many blacks who have not had journalistic training do not

[100] Dodson, "Participant Observation," p. 27.
[101] *Ibid.*, pp. 26-28.

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see any dilemma at all. Lawrence Schneider concluded from a symposium attended by blacks and newsmen that

> No amount of speeches, arguments, reports or articles detailing the merits of objectivity in American journalism, no amount of historical or contemporary reasoning, will convince many Blacks that objectivity is a journalistic virtue, and not instead a manifestation of conscious or unconscious White racism—of avoidance of the problem of fighting racial injustice.
>
> The very instrument—objective reporting—through which many newsmen seek to convince Blacks of their honest intentions is instead seen as a distortion of the "tell it like it is" goal.[102]

Partisan news has both advantages and disadvantages from the point of view of political development. Commitment may be necessary in order to mobilize people for action and to reinstill a sense of pride. On the other hand, it may distort the reliability of available information on which to base social action. Such seems to have been the fatal weakness of Nkrumah's press policy. To be committed without being blinded is a shaky tightrope to tread. In general, however, the crusading of the black press in America and Africa may have helped somewhat to extend the scope and domain of power for black people.

Sociological Disjunctions

Even when the news is seen through black eyes and reported for other black eyes, not all problems have been erased. For the black press in both Africa and the United States is still predominantly an urban elite medium. The elite nature of the African press is obvious: most Africans cannot afford to pay for it and do not understand a European language. The black press in America, too, has been an instrument of the elite. A frequent lament about the *Daily Defender* among its own staff members is that "It is read by *blacks* but written for *Negroes.*" And blacks, they fear, are turning away from it. Analyzing the elite characteristics of the black press in 1944, Myrdal predicted that the black lower classes would eventually assert more control over it.[103]

[102] "White Newsmen and Black Critics," *Nieman Reports*, Vol. 25 (September 1971), p. 7.

[103] *An American Dilemma*, p. 921.

This may explain why *Muhammad Speaks* and *The Black Panther* are increasing circulation at the expense of black "establishment" papers like the *Daily Defender* and the Baltimore *Afro-American*.

Not only is there an elite-"mass" split in both Africa and black America, but there is also an urban-rural split. In Africa, this is compounded by numerous ethnic and linguistic cleavages. African villages frequently are isolated from the modern communications systems of the cities. When the media are concentrated in the cities, they can reach only a minority of the people. Even when communications from the cities seep into the rural hinterland, the villages may have little communication among themselves. Lucian Pye's simile is apt: "The pattern is like the spokes of a wheel all connecting to a hub, but without any outer rim or any direct connections among any of the spokes."[104]

Although the problem is not nearly so acute in the United States, it deserves more attention for its communication implications than it has received. Fifty-five percent of all blacks still lived in the South in 1966, and 31 percent lived in rural areas despite massive migrations to Northern cities.[105] These people form a neglected underbelly of American society. While 38.7 percent of urban blacks age 17 and over were high school graduates in 1967, only 15.9 percent of rural blacks were. The median school grade completed by rural blacks was 8, compared to 10.9 by urban blacks. The median family income of rural blacks was $2,778, compared to $5,105 for urban blacks. Almost 58 percent of rural blacks, compared to about 30 percent of urban blacks, fell below the low-income level.[106] Most of these people are probably beyond the reach of the available black media.

Such factors place a ceiling on the level of power among Afro-Americans themselves. Any restriction on their capacity for political organization makes it difficult for blacks to change the distribution and reciprocity of power within society as a whole.

[104] "Models of Traditional, Transitional, and Modern Communications Systems," in Pye, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

[105] *Report of the Commission*, p. 237.

[106] United States Bureau of the Census, "The Social and Economic Status of Negroes in the United States, 1970," Current Population Reports, Series P-23 No. 38, July 1971, p. 25. These figures refer to rural blacks of rural origin and urban blacks of urban origin. Figures for urban blacks of rural origin are also provided.

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Empathy and Frustration

Those who attend to the mass media may experience profound psychological effects. Daniel Lerner speculates that the prerequisite of modernization is a quality he calls "empathy"—the "capacity to see oneself in the other fellow's situation."[107] Psychic mobility is the dynamic of development. The mass media are the great "mobility multipliers" through which men transform themselves sufficiently to participate in social change.

Some statistical and much circumstantial evidence in developing countries supports Lerner's theory. But is it relevant to the situation of the American Negro? The evidence is thin but suggestive. In his study of the readership of *Ebony*, Paul M. Hirsch found that subscribers had better educations and incomes than the black population as a whole. However, 31 percent of the readers earned less than $5,000 a year and 41 percent had not completed high school. Hirsch concluded that such readers were engaging in "anticipatory socialization" to the values of higher-status blacks.[108] This seems to be an example of empathy at work.

In his controversial analysis of *Ebony* and other publications of the 1950s, E. Franklin Frazier called the Negro press "the chief medium of communication which creates and perpetuates the world of make-believe for the black bourgeoisie."[109] Frazier accused the Negro press of weaving a web of unreality around black life by promulgating bourgeois values and by trumpeting petty achievements of blacks as momentous triumphs. Police magistrates are "judges," a good student is a "genius," a scorned pianist is "acclaimed," middle-class businessmen are "millionaires." Frazier's critique still has some—although less—validity. It might apply to the African press with more force. In the world of make-believe presented by many African publications, ads for Ambi Skin Lightening Cream, Satina Skin Tone Cream and The Rapid Results College lace stories full of the embroidery and triviality that Frazier found in *Ebony*.

Applying Lerner's theory to a black community in upstate New

[107] *The Passing of Traditional Society* (New York: The Free Press, 1958), p. 50.

[108] "An Analysis of Ebony: The Magazine and Its Readers," *Journalism Quarterly*, 45:262 (Summer 1968).

[109] *Black Bourgeoisie* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 146.

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York, Royal D. Colle reports that a majority of his respondents said they made an effort to point out to children or friends instances in which movies or television portray blacks favorably. Aware of the "new images" of themselves, blacks seem to regard them as symbols of what they might accomplish.[110] The problem with empathy is that psychic mobility can be frustrating when actual mobility does not accompany it. Since the new images of blacks in the media may not accurately reflect their real opportunities, Colle speculates that they may lead to frustration and aggression.

Colle's hypothesis is in line with Lerner's theory of a "revolution of rising expectations."[111] The stubborn economic facts that basically define the inferior position of Africans and Afro-Americans show no sign of rapid improvement. Although economic progress is being made, the gap between blacks and whites is widening in many respects. The imbalance between aspiration and achievement, which the mass media can exacerbate, may create severe social conflict. A "revolution of rising frustrations" is one of the most significant possibilities raised by the communication patterns of blacks in Africa and America. Its portent is that communication through force may replace communication through words as the most gratifying—albeit counter-productive—road to power. Manifestations of this phenomenon may be military coups and civil wars in Africa and ghetto violence in the United States.

[110] "Negro Image in the Mass Media: A Case Study in Social Change," *Journalism Quarterly*, 45:60 (Spring 1968).

[111] "Toward a Communication Theory of Modernization," in Pye, *Communications and Political Development*, p. 330.

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WHAT CAN WE conclude from these analogies between communication patterns among Africans and Afro-Americans? One point is that the analogies are rooted in real similarities. Where the patterns still appear threadbare, further examination—perhaps disconfirmation—is especially warranted. Cross-cultural research could improve our understanding of communication in each context.

The study of communication in the framework of power configurations seems to be useful in analyzing political development. We have demonstrated that the communication networks of Africans and Afro-Americans are constricted and that within those networks blacks occupy peripheral positions. Coupled with special cognitive and linguistic handicaps, these facts erect obstinate barriers to reforms in the distribution and reciprocity of power. The assertion of black identity, on the other hand, signifies an attempt to reorder the structure of power that governs relationships between blacks and whites. This is probably a necessary but insufficient basis for the political development of blacks in Africa and the United States. It must be accompanied by fundamental changes in the political and economic structure of American society and the international system to be truly effective. Otherwise the quest for change may take the form of massive upheaval instead of peaceful reform.